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The Changing Faces and Paratext of a Work Collection: A Case Study of DAZAI Osamu's *Ai to Bi ni tsuite*

JAKE ODAGIRI*

1. Introduction and Theorizing Bibliography: A Hybrid of Methodologies

A work of literature cannot be read without a medium. This medium can be a literary coterie magazine, journal, book, or the easily accessible e-book. Although the reader is free to choose from which medium they access the work of literature, there are spaces around the text that can have an effect on how the content of the work is interpreted. These spaces around the text are not static because the more a work is read, the more editions will be published, and, consequently, more changes are inevitable. In order to understand how different publications can have a different effect on how a work is read, the so-called “footprints” of the work(s) need to first be understood. However, there has been little attention paid to analyzing the spaces around a text and how the reading can change through different editions of the same work. This paper will look at two differing methodologies, compare and contrast them, in order to rethink how the spaces around the text can change the reading of the work.

The academic field of collecting, categorizing, and cataloguing the “footprints” of a work or works is bibliography. There are 3 essential branches of bibliography: enumerative, descriptive, and analytical. Even though these branches have varying approaches, there is a significant amount of overlap and share a similar outcome of creating comprehensive lists regarding printed mediums. However, traditionally bibliography is not concerned with what effect this information has on the reading of, say, a work of literature. In contrast to bibliography, the field of research that analyzes the printed medium to determine how the space around the text may influence the reading is called paratext. This term, paratext, was coined by the literary theorist Gérard Genette to understand the “threshold” or a literary “‘vestibule’ which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back”¹ in order to interpret literature.

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¹ Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratext,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1991.

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However, up until now, these two fields, bibliography and paratext, have had differing goals regarding works of literature and their printed medium. Therefore, a hybrid theory of these two methodologies will be presented in order to bridge this gap between bibliography and paratext in order to investigate how the changing faces of a work of literature can change the way it is read.

Bibliographical research deals primarily with tracking down the “footprints” of printed materials. However, without going into too much detail about the technical details of bibliographical research, bibliographers are not usually concerned with how a work of literature is interpreted via the medium of the printed material; e.g. a book. Fredson Bowers, a prominent bibliography scholar stated that, even though in bibliography a “remarkable activity seems to be in progress, but to the general scholar it does not appear to be going anywhere.”² Here it can be seen that Bowers recognizes a paradigm shift in bibliography via a hybrid with critical readings. However, there has been very little effort to hybrid bibliography with other fields of research because, as Bowers states, “bibliographers are prone to adopt a superior air about critical attempts” regarding their work and feel that there is an “invasion” into their field.³

Regarding the need for a hybrid relationship to further bibliography, D. F. McKenzie, a bibliography scholar, first gives a definition as “bibliography is the discipline that studies texts as recorded forms, and the process of their transmission, including their production and reception” while also recognizing “that bibliographers should be concerned to show that forms effect meaning.”⁴ However, even in McKenzie’s understanding for the need to go beyond only the technical side of printed materials, the realization of a paradigm shift seems to be moving very slowly.

Furthermore, not only in Anglophone research but in Japanophone research as well, these signs for the need of a paradigm shift in bibliography are apparent. In a comprehensive study of 75 Japanophone bibliographers, Tanizawa Eiichi, a prominent Modern Japanese Literature bibliographer, stated that in order to create correct records, the bibliographer must first read and understand the text.⁵ This echoes McKenzie’s “forms effect meaning” and the need for this to be a bibliographical concern. Also, Shimizu Yasutsugu, a bibliography scholar in Modern Japanese Literature, pointed out that the future of bibliography needs the cooperation of other disciplines;

² Fredson Bowers, *Bibliography and Textual Criticism*, Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 5–6.

³ Ibid. pp. 5–6.

⁴ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 12–13.

⁵ Tanizawa Eiichi 谷沢永一著, *Nihon Kindai Shoshigaku Saiken* 日本近代書誌学細見, Izumi Shobō 和泉書院、2003.

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by adopting different perspectives, the connection between literature, culture, and society will become the subject of discussion.⁶

Although bibliographical research is very important to literature research, e.g. accessible catalogues, in general bibliographical research is not concerned with how to interpret works of literature and a gap is formed between the two respective fields. Therefore, a paratextual point of view can be vital in bridging the gap between literature research and bibliography. As Genette states, a “text rarely appears in its naked state” and the space around the text enforces the text “precisely in order to *present it*.”⁷ This space is an “entryway” surrounding the text and includes, but not limited to, the cover (jacket), cover page, table of contents, page layout, illustrations or pictures, and many other verbal or non-verbal materials. As time changes, the reading of a work will change, and these spaces “are modified unceasingly according to periods, cultures, genres, authors, works, editions of the same work, with sometimes considerable differences of pressure”⁸ depending on factors such as the author’s image.

The image of an author, or mental-image, can either be created *antemortem* or *posthumous*; however, especially in *posthumous* situations, the author can undergo a mythification process that is strengthened by printed materials and their paratextual functions. This is where paratextual methodology falls short. Although it is recognized within paratextual research to be aware of “editions of the same work,” how these differing editions effect the interpretation of a work of literature is easily identifiable by using bibliographical data. Not only referring to catalogues but by actually handling the differing editions of the same work, the changes that could potentially affect the reading will become clear. These changes can show instances and evidence of the mythification of the author, as this paper will argue.

Dazai Osamu (太宰治, 1909–1948), one of Japan’s most read authors, has undergone this process of mythification after a scandalous love-suicide death in 1948. After many years of biographical research, it has been made clear that Dazai had attempted suicide four times before finally succeeding on the fifth. However, in the biography of Dazai, the “middle period” has been defined as being the period in which many of Dazai’s works have a lighter tone than the darker,

⁶ Shimizu Yasutsugu 清水康次, “Shoshigaku” 書誌学, in *Nihon Kindai Bungaku-kai* 日本近代分学会 ed., *Handobukku Nihon Kindai Bungaku Kenkyū no Hōhō* ハンドブック 日本近代文学研究の方法, Hitsuji Shobō ひつじ書房、2016, p. 207.

⁷ Gérard Genette, “Introduction to the Paratext,” Marie Maclean, trans., *New Literary History*, 1991, pp. 261–272.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 262.

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more cynical “early period” or “latter period” works. This shift of tone is typically attributed to his re-marriage, attempts to be a serious citizen, and devotion to being an author. However, it is important to note that even though there is a classification of the different periods of Dazai’s works, the image of the author has a tendency to remain as a dark, scandalous, and suicidal author. The origins of this image of the author, or mental-image of Dazai Osamu can be traced through the many publications of Dazai’s works; the creation and continuation of Dazai’s image is especially well-established in postmortem publications.

As this paper will argue, by combining bibliographical and paratextual research, the placement and categorization of a work, or in this case a collection of works, can be contradicted by its original form. Therefore, the origin of *Ai to Bi ni tsuite* (愛と美について, hereafter shortened to *Ai to Bi*) and the footprints left behind will be carefully analyzed in Japanophone and Anglophone printed materials. A close look at the content of the work collection in its original form will be compared to how the work collection has been presented and repackaged over an 80-year span.

2. The First Edition and Postwar Publications

First published in 1939 as a collection of 5 previously unpublished works, *Ai to Bi* consists of *Story of the Autumn Wind* (秋風記 *Shūfūki*), *Words of the New Tree* (新樹の言葉 *Shinju no Kotoba*), *Flower Lantern* (花燭 *Kashoku*), *On Love and Beauty* (愛と美について *Ai to Bi ni tsuite*), and *The Firebird* (火の鳥 *Hi no Tori*). The first edition was published by Takemura Shobō and Dazai was involved with the book design process. It is said that Dazai found ideas for the design in a foreign book of embroidery collections.⁹ There are a handful of letters that Dazai sent to Takemura, one in which Dazai highly praised the final product.

In previous research regarding *Ai to Bi*, there are very few mentions to the physical copy of the collection. A two-part paper was published in 1969 and 1970 by Yamanouchi Shōshi,¹⁰ a prominent bibliographer of Dazai. This paper primarily focuses on the genesis and printing of the first edition of the work collection but does not interpret how this process is tied into the reading

⁹ See Tsushima Michiko 津島美知子, “Kōki” 後記, *Dazai Osamu Zenshū* 太宰治全集, Vol. 4, Sōgeisha 創芸社, 1953.

¹⁰ Yamanouchi Shōshi 山内祥史, “‘*Ai to Bi ni tsuite*’ no Shoshi (ichi)” 「愛と美について」の書誌(一), *Nihon Bungei Kenkyū* 日本文芸研究, December 1969, and “‘*Ai to Bi ni tsuite*’ no Shoshi (ni)” 「愛と美について」の書誌(二), *ibid.*, April 1970.

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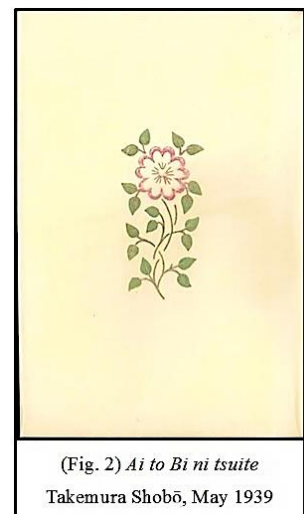
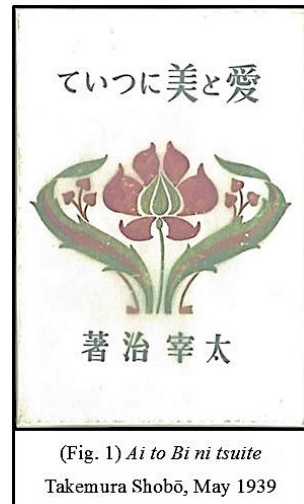
of the works. This section will re-evaluate the editions published during Dazai's life and how the physical copies can be interpreted with the works included in the collection.

The first edition was primarily a white design; it came in a box and has floral designs. The box has a red flower surrounded by green leaves in the shape of a heart (Fig. 1); which can be interpreted to represent “love and beauty” along with the title of the book. Taken out of the box, there is another flower on the cover (Fig. 2). Even though it is a different flower and design, a similar style of flower was used in later editions.

Within the book there is a title page, table of contents, and an introduction “To the Reader.” This introduction, written by Dazai, is only seen in the first edition and not reunited with the collection until the 1975 edition of *The Complete Works of Dazai Osamu*,¹¹ 36 years after the first edition. The introduction “To the Reader” mentions the collection being previously unpublished and how the author and the readers can look forward to reading it. Then it talks about how the stories just add color to the desolation of everyday life; but suggest that maybe loneliness is a type of happiness. It then shifts into an “autobiographical” explanation of how “I” am not unhappy but “I” have caused grief to many people that have been supportive. It finally mentions *The Firebird* being an unfinished work and it needs to be rethought; this work, however, was never completed.

In May of 1942, Takemura Shobō published a collection of 13 works called *Alt Heidelberg* (老ハイデルベルヒ *Aruto Haideruberuhi*). In the introduction, Dazai writes how the readers of *Ai to Bi* wanted a reprinting; however, because of the war and a paper shortage, republishing was not possible. Instead, *Alt Heidelberg* was put together and published.

Eventually *Ai to Bi* was republished in December of 1945 by a smaller publisher.¹² Except for the introduction “To the Reader,” the content is identical to the first edition. This could be



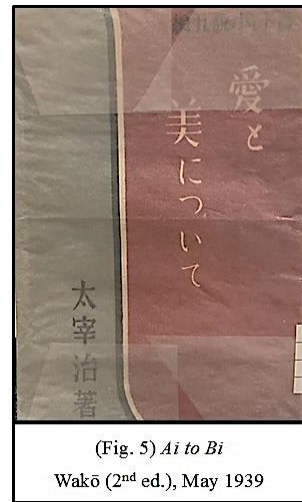
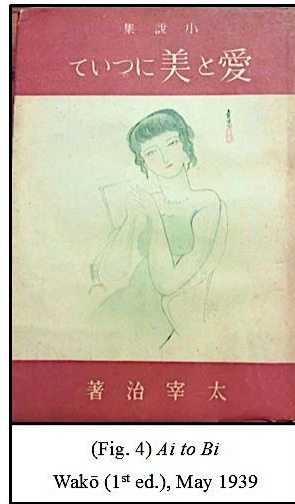
¹¹ See *Dazai Osamu Zenshū* 太宰治全集, Chikuma Shobō 筑摩書房, September 1975.

¹² Nanboku Shoen 南北書園.

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because the original charge, Takemura, was involved with the printing of this edition.¹³ The book design was changed to a musical theme with music notes and hearts (Fig. 3). There is, however, no connection between this musical theme and the works.

The next edition was published by in July of 1947.¹⁴ Once again, other than the exclusion of the introduction, the contents are the same as the first edition. The book designed was changed to a woman in a green dress holding a book (Fig. 4). It is important to note that all of the stories in the collection have central characters which are female and could be influenced by this cover.



Finally, the next, and final, edition was published in June of 1945. It follows the previous editions regarding content. The book design is a simple red and gray cover (Fig. 5). It was technically printed after Dazai's death; however, publishing usually took around 6 months to complete making it a work published within Dazai's life.

Out of these four publications of *Ai to Bi*, only the first edition had any reviews about it. There are four reviews which can be confirmed, all of which gave generally good praise to the works in the collection. An important characteristic to note is, even though there are multiple reviews, none of them directly mention the physical copy. There are, however, indirect references to the physical copy of the book; in particular, the mentioning of the introduction, "To the Reader," which was only included in the first edition. Why do these reviews only talk about the works and, especially

¹³ There are a handful of letters that Dazai sent to Takemura; however, the full extent of their relationship and Takemura's position in the publisher is not clear.

¹⁴ Wakō Shōji Gasshi Gaisha 和光商事合資会社.

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in the case of the first edition, which Dazai himself praised in a letter after it was completed, not the book itself? The import role of the first edition will be argued later in this paper.

Also, it is not unusual that the postwar publications did not receive any reviews because of the social situation and paper shortage issues. It is noteworthy to mention that, even with the social issues and paper shortage, publishers still worked to get these books published. This could explain why the second edition underwent a repackaging into a medium that included a musical theme or the repackaged cover of the third edition with a simple sketch of a woman in a green dress reading a book. The fourth, and final edition during Dazai's life, is the most plain of the four editions; however, the simplicity of the cover could be interpreted that there is an emphasis on the content of the collection and not only the physical appearance of the medium.

Another important feature of these physical copies is the exclusion of the introduction, "To the Reader," in the postwar editions. A careful examination of all the editions show that the layout of each edition is identical down to the page number and character placement. If all four editions were so carefully planned to be identical, why would the introduction be removed postwar? Andō Hiroshi, a Japanese literature researcher, suggested that the introduction was removed by Dazai to fit with the postwar society.¹⁵ However, there is not a clear answer to why, or by whom, it was removed. It does have an important role in the collection especially considering how it suggests that the works inside add color to the desolation of life and how loneliness may be a type of happiness. Although the autobiographical content does not necessarily need to be read as such, the removal (or addition) of an original introduction written by the author will change the way the works are read by defining/redefining or modifying the reading.¹⁶

3. A Collection Taken Apart and a "Bright and Healthy" Placement

There were two complete works released shortly after Dazai's death, and both had the 5 works from the collection; however, they were mixed with other works.¹⁷ Meaning that *Ai to Bi* lost its

¹⁵ Andō Hiroshi 安藤宏, "Dazai Osamu 'Ai to Bi ni tsuite' Ron" 太宰治『愛と美について』論, *Tōkyō Daigaku Kokubungaku Ronshū* 東京大学国文学論集, May 2008.

¹⁶ See Gérard Genette, "The functions of the original preface," *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Jane E. Lewin, trans., Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹⁷ *Dazai Osamu Zenshū* 太宰治全集, vol. 3 & 4, Yakumo Shobō 八雲書房, July & August 1948; *Dazai Osamu Zenshū* 太宰治全集, vol. 4 巻, Sōgeisha, July 1953.

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form as a collection. It was finally reunited in 1955,¹⁸ 10 years after the final 1945 printing. However, the introduction was in the afterword instead of with the collection and it was shown complete with the introduction in 1975, 36 years after the first edition.

Including complete work collections, works from *Ai to Bi* have always been published in some type of collection. From the 1948 edition until the printing of a first edition replica in 1992,¹⁹ *Ai to Bi* had not, and has not since, been published as an independent collection.

Present-day *Ai to Bi* has two forms: *The Complete Works of Dazai Osamu* and in the pocket-book collection *Shinju no Kotoba* (新樹の言葉) which has been published by Shinchō Bunko since 1982. The latter is an easily accessible collection of works from 1939–1940. In other words, *Shinju no Kotoba* is not an independent publishing of the original collection of *Ai to Bi* but another collection of works. This collection plays an important role in the framework of Dazai's (author) image.

The back cover has a blurb that states: "This is a collection from the period when (Dazai) was fervently trying to recover from the daily hell of drug addiction and attempted suicides." Readers familiar with Dazai and the mythification of the author will automatically understand this scandalous image portrayed in the blurb. The following sentence paradoxically states that the title work is a "heartwarming story that contains a prayer for revival." This theme of "revival" is commonly seen in reviews/research regarding the works of *Ai to Bi* as well as works from the same time period.

In the "Explanation (解説 *Kaisetsu*)" by Okuno Takeo, this period is described as being when "in a healthy life, (Dazai) was trying to write bright and healthy works." This period of Dazai's writing is often portrayed as an exceptional time to the dark/suicidal/disqualified human Dazai image. This exceptional "middle period" contains famous works such as *Run, Melos!* (走れメロス *Hashire Merosu*) or *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* (富嶽百景 *Fugaku Hyakkei*), and *Ai to Bi* is typically placed at the entrance of this period.

This image and placement can also be seen on the sleeve of *Blue Bamboo: Tales of Fantasy and Romance*,²⁰ a collection of 7 stories by Dazai translated into English (Fig. 6), which contains a translation of *On Love and Beauty*, originally part of *Ai to Bi*. It states that the content will "reveal the wide range of Dazai's imaginative powers, as well as the humane and idealistic side of a writer

¹⁸ *Dazai Osamu Zenshu* 太宰治全集, Chikuma Shobō 筑摩書房, November 1955.

¹⁹ *Nihon Kindai Bungaku-kan Shuppan* 日本近代文学館出版, June 1992.

²⁰ Kodansha International, 1993.

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too often thought as dark, cynical, and self-absorbed.” Paying special attention to how Dazai is “too often thought as dark, cynical, and self-absorbed” it can be seen how this blurb in the sleeve repackaging this collection as “imaginative,” “humane,” “idealistic,” while still portraying Dazai as “dark.” Also, it states that “*Blue Bamboo* will go a long way toward transforming Dazai’s reputation from that of a perverse, self-pitying frog of an author into that of a warm, inventive, and life-affirming prince of a fantastic.”

Blue Bamboo was republished in 2000 with the subtitle: *Japanese Tales of Fantasy*.²¹ The cover changed from the black/dark blue cover with a winged girl²² to a multi-colored cover depicting crows (Fig. 7). Other changes include the change of the subtitle to and the removal of an excerpt from *On Love and Beauty* replaced with reviews. Changes in the sleeve blurb are also seen which remove the “dark” “frog” description of Dazai with an emphasis on the “imaginative,” “humane” side of Dazai.

Once again published in 2013,²³ this edition of *Blue Bamboo* is green with a bamboo scene in the center (Fig. 8). The subtitle was changed to: *Tales by Dazai Osamu*. The back cover reads that it is a “glimpse into the humorous, sardonic world of Dazai Osamu” and it is also a “very different look at one of the recognized masters of Japanese, and indeed global, literature.” On the official website for this edition, there is a blurb that states “this is a book that reveals an intelligent and humorous Dazai seldom encountered in existing English translations” and also repackaging the dark image of Dazai’s works depicting “the human condition in painfully blunt and realistic terms, but, like life itself, is often accompanied by a smile.”²⁴

Each of these *Blue Bamboo* collections also contains introductions by the translator. Interestingly it is a concise introduction which gives only a short biography of Dazai without touching on the scandalous nature of his life. Instead it focuses on Dazai’s style of writing. In these *Blue Bamboo* collections *On Love and Beauty* is included with a short explanation that only mentions when it was first published. It is explained that the work was originally edited down but the translator restored most of it to preserve the balance. The 2013 edition has a shortened version of this introduction but essentially contains the same information. These collections of translated works place them into a “warm” framework similar to the “bright and healthy” framework seen in the Japanese publications.

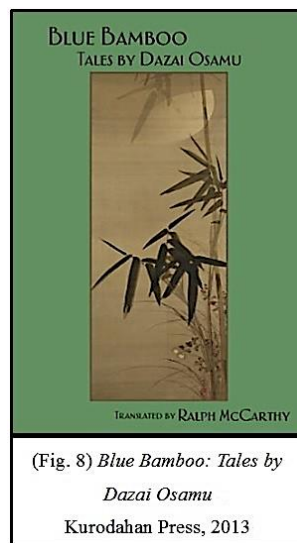
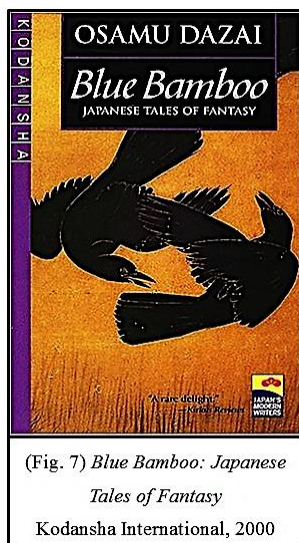
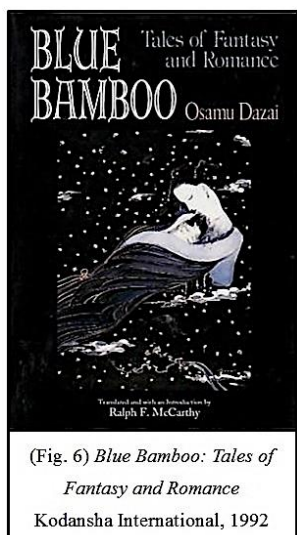
²¹ Kodansha International, 2000.

²² Art by Amano Yoshitaka of the Final Fantasy series.

²³ Kurodahan Press, 2013.

²⁴ <https://www.kurodahan.com/wp/e/catalog/9784902075588.html>, accessed 26 December, 2018.

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This reframing and repackaging of Dazai's image along with works from *Ai to Bi* has modified the reading of the collection. This is most prevalent in Japanophone research and the repackaging that was analyzed in this section. It is also interesting to note that in the two major books on Dazai Osamu in Anglophone research, there is no direct reference to the collection *Ai to Bi*. In Phillis Lyons' book, *The Saga of Dazai Osamu: A Critical Study with Translations*,²⁵ there is a translated excerpt from *Story of the Autumn Wind* which is tied into parts of *Recollections* (思ひ出 *Omohide*), one of Dazai's early works.²⁶ Lyons classifies this time of Dazai's life as when "he settled into married life, and behaved like a typical young husband" while "working hard and piling up a steady stream of small success in the form of stories and books published."²⁷ Also, Alan Wolfe's book, *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan: The Case of Dazai Osamu*,²⁸ which, from the title suggests framing Dazai into the classic "suicidal" author but does not mention any works from *Ai to Bi*.

The reasoning for not including *Ai to Bi* in these Anglophone research books is not clear. However, the lack of inclusion of this work in these books suggests that the authors were not concerned with the physical copy of Dazai's works, but rather focused on how the *text* can be interpreted. This focus on *text* instead of the packaging in which a work comes in raises the question

²⁵ Stanford University Press, 1985.

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 99–100; there is a translated excerpt on page 1, as well.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 42.

²⁸ Princeton University Press, 1990.

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of how it can be re-evaluated in its original form.

4. Rethinking *Ai to Bi* in its Original Form

As previously established, a work of literature cannot be read without a medium. Every work of literature has an origin and bibliographical/paratextual research provide the tools which can be used to find the roots of the work. What are the benefits of returning to the roots of a work? What paratextual features can only be seen in the original form? This section will place *Ai to Bi* into its original form, the first edition, and investigate what paratextual features only be seen in this form.

The readership while Dazai was alive was very small compared to the current readership. In the introduction to *Alt Heidelberg* it is mentioned that there were around 2,000 copies of the first edition of *Ai to Bi* published. This readership was able to read *Ai to Bi* in its complete version. The structure the collection itself in its complete form will have a large impact on how it is read and interpreted.

In regards to the paratextual structure of *Ai to Bi*, *Story of the Autumn Wind* and *The Firebird*, the two works that bookend the collection, set a tone that varies greatly from the common “bright and healthy” placement because both of these works have a main theme of suicide/death. First, *Story of the Autumn Wind* will be looked at from a thematic level and then, following this, a brief look at how *The Firebird* begins and ends, as well as the story as an “unfinished work” effects the way it is read will be analyzed.

The main theme of *Story of the Autumn Wind* revolves around how the main character/narrator “I” wants to die. However, this obsession with death is not only limited to “I” but extends to his friend named “K” who is married to another man and has a child. “I” and “K” are close childhood friends that grew up in the same neighborhood. In their conversations “I” asks “K” if she detests him and she says that “I even think that it would be good if you died”. Even though this interaction may seem like friendly banter between these two characters, the following conversation confirms the seriousness in which “I” wish to die.

In late autumn of this year, I pulled a plaid hunting cap over my eyes and visited K. I whistled 3 times and K quietly came out of the wooden back door.

“How much?”

“It’s not about money.”

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K looked deeply into my face.

“You want to die?”

“Yeah.”

K lightly bit her bottom lip.

After this conversation, “I” and “K” embark on a so-called “suicide trip” to a local hot spring. Although in the they do not end up committing suicide, there are many conversations in the story that continue in this theme of death and suicide. In one scene, “I” and “K” were speaking of the hotel and “I” admitted that he had been there before in order to attempt suicide. In this conversation, the two characters seem to be having a normal conversation but it quickly shifts to “I” asking “K” to die with him. In the first-person narrative of this story, the mentality of the narrator is obvious to the readers as he contemplates their conversation while climbing the stairs.

The next scene which will be analyzed here is toward the end of the story. “I” and “K” survived the night without committing suicide and went out for a walk the next morning. While walking, they are discussing their situation in life and the problems with being “privileged” members of society. The following is a portion of that conversation.

“That feeling you have of wanting to die...” K stooped down to wipe the mud off of her bare feet. “I understand.”

“Why is it,” I said with the slyness of a 22 or 23-year-old man, “that we can’t independently live our lives?”

“That is because nobody will let us. Everybody takes care of us to the point of it being spiteful.”

This confession by “K” of her understanding the desire to die resounds strongly in this story. The two main characters of *Story of the Autumn Wind* both live very privileged lives and the constant feeling of “(e)verybody takes care of us to the point of it being spiteful” drives “K” to understand the desire to commit suicide. Ironically, shortly after this confession, “K” is hit by a passing bus. Even though she lives through the accident, it does bring into perspective how this story is framed around the desire to die linked in closely to the theme of suicide.

Next, the last work in *Ai to Bi, The Firebird*, will be analyzed. This work has two particular issues that will be analyzed here. First, the theme of suicide. Second, the fact that it is an

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“unfinished work.” The structure of the work, upon close examination, shows the “unfinished” theme which resonates throughout the story itself as well as beyond the story.

The end of the first “chapter” of the work depicts how the main character “Takano Sachiyo” and “Suzuki Otsuhiko” attempt to commit a double suicide. The scene is depicted in the following manner.

After they were alone together, Sachiyo spoke.

“You are going to die, yes?”

“You knew?” Otsuhiko laughed slightly.

“Yes, see, I’m unhappy.” Just as she thought she had found somebody, he already was not a part of this world.

“Can I say something silly?” Sachiyo asked.

“What?”

“Won’t you stay alive? I will do anything. Not matter how painful it is, I’ll endure.”

“It’s too late.”

“Oh.” I will die with him. I have seen one night of happiness. “I said something silly, right? Do you think less of me?”

“I respect you.” As Otsuhiko slowly answered, a tear shined in his eye.

That night, in a room at the Imperial Hotel, they took some medication. While the two of them sat neatly on the sofa, they became cold. In the middle of the night, a middle-aged bellhop found them. He had sensed something. He relaxed, quietly left the room, and gently woke up the manager. They quietly took care of things. Until morning, the entire hotel slept soundly. Suzuki Otsuhiko was, completely, dead.

The girl... still lived...

This bleak beginning of the story sets the tone in which Sachiyo tries to reclaim her life. However, she is constantly haunted with the memory of not only wanting to take her own life, but that Otsuhiko did not survive the ordeal. As the work continues, it is made clear that Sachiyo’s mother committed suicide shortly after her father ran away to Tokyo to become an artist. Although this does not directly tie into Sachiyo and her attempted suicide, the inclusion of it in the narrative does imply that the suicide of her mother has had some effect on her.

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Finally, a look at the end of the work to understand the significance of it being an “unfinished work”. This scene takes place between “Takasu Takaya” and “Yaeda Kazue” in a taxi after they had been drinking and Kazue explained to Takaya that Sachiyo has considered becoming a mistress to a man in order to receive funds. The scene unfolds in the following manner.

In the car, Takaya spoke.

“Stupid. Stupid and stupid and very stupid. I need to thank you, Kazue. Thanks for letting me know.” Kazue had a bad feeling and was feeling distant. “I love Sachiyo. I love, I love, I love her. I love her more than anyone else. I’ve never forgotten. I understand her pain more than anyone else does. I understand everything. She is a good person. You can’t let her rot. Stupid, stupid. Becoming somebody’s mistress... Stupid. She should die! I’ll kill her.”

This aggressive monologue by Takaya is followed by “The Firebird unfinished (火の鳥未完)” meaning that the story itself is never resolved. Not only the emotions expressed here by Takaya, but Sachiyo’s future and the outcome of her attempt to reclaim her life after a suicide attempt remain unresolved. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the “unfinished” statement at the end of the work extends beyond just this work itself. From a paratextual point of view, even though it states “The Firebird unfinished,” this nuance of abrupt termination ties into very closely to the framework of suicide/death seen in the first and last works of *Ai to Bi*.

In the context of the first edition, this paratextual nuance is especially prevalent and contradicts the regular placement of the work into a “bright and healthy” collection of works. In particular, this contextual form is broken up shortly after Dazai’s death and, in current editions, for example, *Shinju no Kotoba*, there is no distinct separation of *Ai to Bi*’s works and the other works in the collection. Therefore, the importance of the first edition and the paratextual reading which it provides is a key to reanalyzing its placement in Dazai’s work.

5. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed a collection of five stories by Dazai Osamu through a theorized version of bibliographical/paratextual research as a hybrid methodology. A work of literature cannot be read without a medium and that work of literature has its roots which can contradict later interpretations by academics and critics. In research on *Ai to Bi* there has been very little emphasis

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placed on the first edition and the implications which it has regarding the stories within. However, as this paper has argued, this first edition shows a different recurring theme and stories than the conventional placement into a period of “bright and healthy” works of Dazai during the so-called “middle period.” To uncover the theme of suicide and how it is emphasized by the abrupt termination of *The Firebird*, the footprints of *Ai to Bi* must be followed back to the first edition while making comparisons to other editions of the collection. From the final publishing in June of 1945, right after Dazai’s death, until the 1992 replica of the first edition, *Ai to Bi* has not been published as an independent work collection; it has always been part of other work collections or the larger *Complete Works of Dazai Osamu* which suggests that the five works are easily interpreted out of context.

Another idea which was touched upon in this paper was the concept of the author’s image. The postmortem mythification of Dazai has had a very large influence on the interpretation of Dazai’s works, and in some cases has become deeply engrained in the readings. Although this paper only briefly touched on research previously done on the five works of *Ai to Bi*, there is a very clear trend of reading this work collection alongside the mythification of Dazai Osamu as a “suicidal” author that was seeking to “reclaim” his life around the late 1930s. However, as this paper has shown, the works from this era do not necessarily reflect this image of Dazai, especially when the works are read in their original form with a paratextual point of view.